

**Arlington Human Rights Commission  
Minutes, July 20, 2016  
Jefferson Cutter House, 8:00  
Christine Carney, Chair**

Present: Commissioners Christine Carney, Mel Goldsipe, Sheri Baron, Wendy Bell, Marlissa Briggett, Yawa Degboe, Ghanda DiFiglia, Christopher Huvos, William Logan, Nick Minton  
Absent: Commissioners Gary Horowitz, Jorge Loayza

In addition to Arlington Police Officers James Smith and Julie Flaherty, there were approximately 40 citizens present for the citizens' open forum.

Chair Carney introduced herself and vice-chair Mel Goldsipe and called the meeting to order at 8:08 p.m.

Given the number of citizens wishing to discuss recent incidents, Commissioner Briggett moved to table all items other than the discussion of recent incidents until the next meeting. Commissioner Goldsipe seconded and it was approved unanimously. Commissioner Grossman moved that the Commission meet on July 26, 2016 to discuss tabled items. Commissioner Degboe seconded and it was approved unanimously.

Chair Carney noted that while there have been no recent official complaints, the Commission has been notified of a series of several troubling incidents.

Commissioner Baron described the Response Coordination Team set up to include diverse town constituencies (government, nonprofits, houses of worship) to determine responses to hate incidents. She indicated that she and Commissioner Huvos will be meeting with 8-10 other local human rights commissions to see how they respond to incidents in a timely manner.

A citizen asked what was the primary communication vehicle to disseminate information about incidents. Commissioner Baron indicated it would be the Response Coordination Team and, in some cases, a reverse 911 call.

In response to a citizen question regarding the response to the family whose garage had been vandalized with swastikas, Commissioner Baron indicated that she had reached out to them on Saturday (the day of the incident) and that Chief Ryan had called from the scene and that the APD had arranged to have the graffiti painted over. Officer Smith described the investigation and indicated that he had spoken to the homeowner 3 or 4 times. Officer Smith had secured a painter to paint over the graffiti. He indicated that the painter refused payment because he felt the graffiti did not represent our community and he did not want to see this kind of thing in his town.

There was a long discussion about working on proactive measures to counter the intolerance represented by these recent events. Commissioner Baron wrote the suggestions down for all to see. [The transcribed list is attached at the end of these minutes.]

One young woman indicated that she had already been planning a dialogue at First Parish UU to talk about the Black Lives Matter movement. She invited all to come (July 31 at 3 p.m.).

School Committee member Jen Susse indicated that she is interested in participating in joint statements/events with AHRC and working on ways to involve the schools at every level. Commissioner Grossman described our school liaison program.

Selectman Joe Curro noted that Black Lives Matter and support for police are not a dichotomy. He pointed out that the signs supporting both stand next to each other in Arlington Center. The room applauded the APD response to the graffiti incident.

There was general discussion about building relationships with newcomers and among neighbors – building community. (Examples: campaign to inspire upstanders, rather than bystanders; True Story Theater; A Settling In booklet distributed by real estate agents; a march; buttons and literature; library involvement; porchfest and block parties; acts of guerrilla kindness/boom boom cards/Arlington Cares cards.

ACMi indicated that it would be airing a live panel discussion on August 4 at 7 p.m. with representation from Black Lives Matter, the Diversity Task Group, a media professor and the APD.

At 10:00, Commissioner Briggett moved to adjourn, with Commissioner Logan seconding and unanimous voting in favor of the motion.

Submitted by Marlissa Briggett, Commissioner

## **Brainstorming results from community discussion (AHRC meeting 7-20-2016)**

### **Action**

Create broad community show of support in reaction to hate incidents. These are good opportunities to build understanding.

Be an "upstander."

Create "hate-free zones."

One model of success: public art in East Arlington. [East Arlington Stories outdoor wheat-pasted posters about business owners.]

School Committee is very interested in making big public statements. Do something "big and splashy, showy."

"Choose to be Nice" program - armbands, T-shirts.

Acts of "guerrilla kindness." Boom Boom Cards have examples.

### **Community Building**

Core of understanding of others and better community is relationships. Strong relationships among people make people happier and feel more connected.

Educate people about how to become engaged - need more information to newcomers. Work with Chamber of Commerce to create a new neighbor welcome packet for Realtors to give new residents.

Make renters more welcome, not just homeowners.

Concern about broadening attendance at events instead of only reaching the same audience over and over. How can we bring in more diverse crowds that are more representative of the diversity of our town's citizens.

Porchfest was a very enjoyable and highly successful in bringing neighbors together of all ages. Expand Porchfest into other areas of Arlington?

Encourage neighborhood block parties and other super-local events. AHRC could create a toolkit for neighborhood community-building for neighborhood leaders to use.

Survey: "How does it feel when someone moves into Arlington?" Bowes to do this?

## **Dialogue**

A recent AHS graduate is hosting a "sharing of ideas" at First Parish UU on July 31, 2016 at 3 p.m.

Joint subcommittee of AHRC and Schools.

A project like Story Corps to record and share personal experiences, positive or negative, related to diversity issues.

Town Meeting membership needs more diversity.

Town Meeting "mini-meetings" (precincts) multiple times during the year to discuss what is happening in each precinct - areas of concern - gives TM members sense of what is important to their constituents.

## **Education**

Peter, Paul & Mary project mentioned. ["Don't Laugh at Me," developed by Peter Yarrow and Dr. Charlotte Frank. The curriculum aims to encourage respectful relationships among students. It is available free of charge to schools and youth groups. For more information about the curriculum and other tools to encourage respect for diversity, do a web search for "Operation Respect."]

Look at Facing History and Ourselves, which has programs for no bullying, for guidelines/ideas.

Look at tolerance, empathy, relationship skills encouraged/taught in schools - build into curriculum - train all teachers and admins/all building staff.

Perhaps look into "No Place for Hate" again. It may be a little too negative for early education. [We began this program years ago, but withdrew when the ADL refused to recognize that the Armenian genocide was authentic.]

Publicize positive images as powerful as swastikas in next week's paper to counter hate graffiti.

Help parents learn how to talk to kids at Middle School.

Use public libraries - find creative ways to engage people in learning about cultural differences.

**Outreach/Publicity**

Expand AHRC mailing list.

How to reach people who won't otherwise come forward with complaints or ideas? AHRC should make itself more present. In addition to yearly outreach in the schools that AHRC already does, show up in other locations around town where we can take complaints and tell people what we do. And perhaps expand to talking to principals twice a year plus PTOs, School Councils, directly to kids. Other examples: Sr. Centers, Housing Authority, town employees, new residents.

Use Town Day and Election Day for dissemination of materials/surveys, etc. Place AHRC brochures at all town-related booths on Town Day.

AHS principal (for 10 years) did not know that AHRC existed. [This was said by one of the attendees, but it seems unlikely because of the AHRC school liaisons.]

**Technical/Tools**

Update complaint form to make it much more user-friendly. [This has been completed.]

Allow complaints to be filed over the phone, through a web form, and other methods to increasing access.